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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 003021

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - EUROPE: MAY 5 UK ELECTIONS
TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS
PARIS - PARIS - WEDNESDAY, MAY 04, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- [1](#)1. EUROPE: MAY 5 UK ELECTIONS
- [1](#)2. TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

TODAY'S HEADLINES ARE FOR THE MOST PART DEVOTED TO TONY BLAIR AND HIS "PROBABLE RE-ELECTION" (LE FIGARO). IN HIS EDITORIAL PIERRE ROUSSELIN WRITES ABOUT A "HISTORIC THIRD MANDATE" FOR BLAIR. INSIDE, A REPORT BY JACQUES DUPLUOICH IS TITLED: "BLAIR TORN BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE U.S." (SEE PART C) CATHOLIC LA CROIX HEADLINES "TONY BLAIR: HEADING FOR A WIN" WHILE COMMUNIST L'HUMANITE HEADLINES: "TONY BLAIR: THE IRON MAN."

U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT PORTMAN IS PORTRAYED BY GILLES BIASSETTE IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX: "PROMOTING FREE TRADE IN THE U.S. AS WELL AS IN EUROPE HAS BECOME A DIFFICULT TASK. BUT PORTMAN'S POLITICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE U.S. AND HIS KNOWLEDGE OF HOW CONGRESS WORKS WILL BE USEFUL. BECAUSE NEGOTIATING FREE TRADE IS ALSO NEGOTIATING WITH LOCALLY ELECTED POLITICIANS. BESIDES TRADE CONFLICTS WITH CHINA, PORTMAN WILL BE DEALING WITH BRUSSELS OVER AIRLINE SUBSIDIES. ON MONDAY, ALONGSIDE HIS EUROPEAN COUNTERPART, PORTMAN REITERATED THAT 'A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION REMAINS THE PREFERRED OPTION' IN THE AIRBUS-BOEING ISSUE."

PRESIDENT CHIRAC'S TELEVISED INTERVIEW LAST EVENING TO PROMOTE THE 'YES' FOR THE EU REFERENDUM IS WIDELY REPORTED. COMMENTATORS CALL HIS INTERVENTION "A REMEDIAL LESSON" AIMED AT CORRECTING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT MADE BY HIS PREVIOUS TELEVISED "SHOW" WITH 80 YOUNG PEOPLE IN APRIL. HIS AFFIRMATION THAT "ITER WILL BE BUILT IN FRANCE" IS REPORTED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF ECONOMIC LES ECHOS. IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE PARISIEN JEAN DARRIULAT COMMENTS: "IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE EUROPEANS' PERSEVERANCE IS PAYING OFF. NOT ONLY FINANCIALLY, BUT POLITICALLY. AFTER PRESIDENT BUSH'S RE-ELECTION, AND HIS DESIRE TO FIX RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEANS AFTER THE IRAQI HORNETS' NEST, THE AMERICANS MADE IT KNOWN THAT THEY NO LONGER HAD A PREFERENCE FOR THE SITE AND WISHED FOR AN AGREEMENT TO BE REACHED BETWEEN THE EUROPEANS AND THE JAPANESE."

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO CARRIES AN OP-ED BY FORMER NEWSWEEK PARIS BUREAU CHIEF TED STANGER ON PRESIDENT CHIRAC AND TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS. (SEE PART C)

ALEXANDRE ADLER WRITES A COLUMN IN LE FIGARO TITLED "BUSH, HISTORY AND ITS CHOICES." HE DEFINES THE STATE OF THE WORLD TODAY, PRESIDENT BUSH'S SUCCESSES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (IRAQ'S NEW GOVERNMENT, LEBANON, LIBYA'S DISARMING, PAKISTAN AND INDIA'S NEW DIALOGUE) BUT ALSO IRAN'S NUCLEAR TEMPTATIONS AND THE OPTIONS OPEN TO PRESIDENT BUSH. (SEE PART C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

EUROPE: MAY 5 UK ELECTIONS

"BLAIR TORN BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE U.S"
JACQUES DUPLOUICH IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (05/04):
"BEYOND THE WAR IN IRAQ AND THE ISSUE OF ITS LEGITIMACY, WHAT TRANSPIRED WAS THE NATURE OF TONY BLAIR'S FOREIGN POLICY, IN RELATION TO WASHINGTON, EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST. WHILE EUROPE IS ESSENTIAL IN BLAIR'S EYES, THE U.S. IS JUST AS IMPORTANT. THIS IS WHY HE HAS SUGGESTED HE SERVE AS A 'BRIDGE' BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW CONTINENT. HE CANNOT AND DOES NOT WANT TO CHOOSE, BECAUSE GREAT BRITAIN'S VOCATION IS TO BE BOTH EUROPEAN AND ATLANTICIST. TONY BLAIR HAS DEFINED THREE OBJECTIVES RESULTING FROM THIS POSTULATE: TO ANCHOR GREAT BRITAIN AT THE CORE OF AN ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION, TO RE-INSTATE ITS STRATEGIC INFLUENCE. AND TO PARTICIPATE IN EXPANDING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIBERTIES BY FAVORING DEMOCRATIC EXPANSION THROUGH THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY. BUT SOME SEE BLAIR AS THE 'TROJAN MULE' OF U.S. INTERESTS ON THE OLD CONTINENT."
TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

"CHIRAC IN THE MIDST OF A TRANSATLANTIC TEMPEST"

TED STANGER IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (05/04): "FOR OVER TWO CENTURIES FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS WERE BASED ON A VERY USEFUL HYPOCRISY: THE TWO COUNTRIES WERE SUPPOSED TO BE FRIENDS. CHIRAC AND BUSH HAVE TOGETHER DISPELLED THIS ILLUSION. THE TRUTH IS THAT WE ARE NO LONGER EVEN FALSE FRIENDS. CHIRAC IS ONLY SUPERFICIALLY INTERESTED IN THE ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN PARIS AND WASHINGTON. THE RAPPROCHEMENT ATTEMPTS ARE MORE VIRTUAL THAN REAL, WITH THE LESS THAN CONVINCING VISIT TO PARIS BY SECRETARY OF STATE RICE AND PRESIDENT BUSH'S TRIP TO BRUSSELS, WHERE HE AND CHIRAC MANAGED TO NEVER LOOK EACH OTHER IN THE EYE. IN SPITE OF FRANCE'S NUCLEAR ABILITY, IT STILL NEEDS WASHINGTON AS A MILITARY ALLY. THIS TRUTH IS EVEN GREATER TODAY THAN 50 YEARS AGO. FRANCE'S STANCE ON IRAQ HAS NOT PROTECTED IT FROM TERRORISM AND HOSTAGE TAKING. WHAT BETTER ALLY TO PROTECT FRANCE IS THERE THAN THE U.S.? BUT THE MONTHS AND YEARS TO COME ARE NOT PROMISING ONES FOR THE FRANCE-AMERICA DUO. WHILE BARNIER WAS ABLE TO PLAY THINGS DOWN WITH WASHINGTON, WASHINGTON IS AFRAID THAT DE VILLEPIN'S POSSIBLE NOMINATION AS PRIME MINISTER COULD TRIGGER A NEW CONFRONTATION. BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE U.S. THAT WOULD BE AS FRUITLESS AS THE LAST ONE. IT IS NOT EASY FOR CHIRAC TO DEAL WITH THE AMERICAN SUPERPOWER, ESPECIALLY SINCE BUSH'S ARRIVAL AT THE WHITE HOUSE. UNFORTUNATELY, IS PROBABLY ALREADY TOO LATE FOR CHIRAC TO LINK UP WITH THE OLD TRADITION OF FRENCH DIPLOMACY WHEN FRENCH LEADERS WERE ABLE TO DISCREETLY GIVE ADVICE TO THE MAN IN THE WHITE HOUSE."

"BUSH AND THE HESITATIONS OF HISTORY"

ALEXANDRE ADLER IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (05/04): "PRESIDENT BUSH CAN BE PROUD OF HIS ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. EVEN IF DARK SPOTS REMAIN. BUT IRAN'S NUCLEAR ASPIRATIONS REPRESENT A DIFFICULT CRISIS THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED. MILITARILY SPEAKING, THE AMERICANS DO NOT POSSESS A CAPABILITY OF DETERRENCE VIS-A-VIS THEIR IRANIAN ADVERSARY AND PARTNER. THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION MUST MAKE A CHOICE IT HAS NOT PREPARED FOR. JUST AS IT MUST MAKE A CHOICE IN ITS TRADE RELATIONS WITH CHINA. IN LATIN AMERICA A DANGEROUS PHENOMENON IS BREWING. SECRETARY RICE'S RECENT TRIP WAS AN ATTEMPT TO CONJURE THE TEMPEST. BUT A CONFRONTATION WITH VENEZUELA SEEMS TO BE IN THE WORKS. THE CHOICES FACING THE U.S. REMAIN IN THE REALM OF THE POSSIBLE EVEN IF THEY ARE PAINFUL CHOICES, BECAUSE THEY ARE IN OPPOSITION TO BUSH'S BASIC IDEOLOGY. BUT IF THE U.S. PRESIDENT, WITH THE HELP OF CONDOLEEZZA RICE, MANAGES TO SEPARATE THE ISSUES IN LATIN AMERICA, TO HELP IRAN FIND AN OUT FROM THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND HELP CHINA IN ITS TRANSITION. THEN THE PRECIOUS ACHIEVEMENTS REACHED THANKS TO THE PRESIDENT'S POLITICAL AND MILITARY COURAGE WILL BE PRESERVED. IF NOT, TODAY'S GLOBALIZATION IS PAVING THE WAY TO FRIGHTENING STORMS." ROSENBLATT